

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraph [0031] with the following amended paragraph:

[0031] Generally, response pricing is determined with respect to any variety of pricing criteria including, for example, time-based criteria, request-type criteria, priority criteria, historical information, customer identification criteria, and combinations thereof. These pricing criteria are applied to define pricing schedules that the manager may access to calculate a cost for a request. In one embodiment, pricing criteria is defined in service contracts 112 stored in a database 110. A service contract may exist for each contractual customer of the provider 102 (i.e., each customer with whom the provider 102 has entered into a legal agreement). In another embodiment, pricing criteria may be specified in generic pricing schedules 114 for customers who do not have contractual agreements with the service provider. Different generic pricing schedules 114 may exist for a variety of different pricing criteria including those mentioned above (e.g., request-time criteria, request-type criteria, priority criteria, historical information, customer identification criteria, and combinations thereof). In each case, the service contracts 112 and the generic pricing schedules 114 are accessible and readable by manager (i.e., the pricing criteria [[is]] are stored on computer readable media). The database 110 may also contain historical data 124 that include a log of requests received and processed in the past, with the corresponding amount of resources used and the time taken to process the request.

Please replace paragraph [0033] with the following amended paragraph:

[0033] As an example, a time-based criteria may provide different pricing schedules depending on when the request is processed. For example, there may be a higher fee for requests that are processed during peak time day hours, as opposed to those performed during slower times, such as late night. Additionally, [[a]] request-type criteria may provide different pricing schedules based on the kind of service requested. For example, an update request may be, in general, more expensive than a read request.

Please replace paragraph [0034] with the following amended paragraph:

[0034] [[A]] priority criteria may be supplied by the customers using a generic pricing schedule 114 or may be contained in a service contract 112 for contractual customers. The priority criteria may be used in determining when to process a customer's request. For example, if a request is specified as high priority and there is a shortage of resources, resources may be taken away from other less pressing requests to process this high priority request, as described in detail below with respect to Figure 5. Accordingly, a pricing schedule may specify relatively higher fees to be charged for a higher priority request.

Please replace paragraph [0035] with the following amended paragraph:

[0035] Historical information may also serve as [[a]] criteria for determining a pricing schedule. The historical information may be supplied by the historical data 124 which includes information about the amount of resources and time taken to process a request in the past. The historical database 124 may be searched to determine whether a similar or same request as the request received has been processed in the past. If a similar request is located in the historical data, the information about resources used and time taken to process the request may be used to select a different pricing schedule. The pricing schedules may also vary based on [[a]] customer identification criteria. As such, contractual customers may have their own customized pricing schedules defined in their service contracts. Additionally, even generic pricing schedules 114 may vary from customer to customer. For example, first time customers may be charged more than regular customers. Of course, each of the criteria mentioned above are optional, and may or may not be used in determining pricing schedules, in different embodiments. Additionally, pricing schedules may exist that take account of a combination of the one or more pricing criteria.

Please replace paragraph [0038] with the following amended paragraph:

[0038] The foregoing discussion is directed at requests requiring returning of a result. However, it should be noted that alternative requests may not require returning results. For example, a request for batch processing (updating a database) is completed, as soon as, the database is updated, and does not require returning a result. In such [[a]] cases, the results returned may be a notification that the process is complete. Delaying the return of results, in these cases, may not be valuable, as the real value is in timely performance of the request. An alternative method for delaying may be used, wherein after resources become available for processing the request, completion time is estimated based on historical data for the request, and a total completion time is calculated by adding the wait time to the estimated completion time. For example, if it takes 5 seconds for resources to become available and it is estimated that the process should take 10 seconds, the total completion time is calculated as 15 seconds. If, the required completion time, in such a case, is, for example, between 20 and 30 seconds, the process may be delayed randomly between 5 and 10 seconds, to provide a total completion time of 20 to 25 seconds.